



Birmingham Repertory Theatre

Triptych

Frederick Bentham

People often ask me what theatres they should see. At one time the answer was very easy; we only had one new building—the Royal Festival Hall—and, while it was a rotten theatre, it was a very exciting auditorium when the place was seen as conceived—namely as a 3,000 seat concert hall—so a trot over the river was considered essential. Before long we had The Mermaid and The Nottingham Playhouse and . . . but somehow I was never very keen on sending people to Coventry—particularly once it involved seeing that back stage. Since that time the pace of theatre building has increased and now there are so many new ones that it is important to be selective. It is not just a question of which are those

theatres that are new, but which are those that carry a message or a lesson—or since they are theatres—some kind of thrill.

The three I am about to describe all warrant a visit, for although two are at first sight orthodox prosceniums they are so different in purpose. All three theatres have this in common—they are objects of Civic Pride and considerable trouble has been taken to make them architecturally important as buildings. Indeed up to now no completed theatre in this country has been given such an architecturally dominant site as the new Birmingham Rep. It is a pity that this prominence is mainly bestowed on circumnavigating motor cars puzzling their way through Birmingham's